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ABSTRACT

This report is another in a continuing series of reports on open admissions compiled by the CUNY Office of Program and Policy Research. An earlier report dealt with general trends in student retention at the City University of New York during the period September 1970 through June 1972. The new report studies academic trends, in terms of credits earned, grade point average, and the ratio of credits attempted. Data on which the study is based were collected for freshmen who entered in 1970 and 1971. For the 1970 freshmen, academic outcomes were described over the course of the first four semesters. For the 1971 freshmen, academic outcomes were described for the first two semesters. Data on the first year performance of the two classes were compared. Data were reported in aggregate form for senior and community colleges: comparisons between individual CUNY colleges were also present. Four major topics were considered: (1) academic performance of students (grade point average and credit operation); (2) retention as related to academic performance; (3) the impact of compensatory programs on retention and academic performance; and (4) comparison of academic outcomes for SEEK and non-SEEK students. Based on high school grades, analyses were conducted within certain high school average categories. (Author/JM)

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SUMMARY OF THE REPORT:

OPEN ADMISSIONS AT THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

A Description of Academic Outcomes After Two Years

by

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June , 1974

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City University of New York
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NOTE: The need for this summary was indicated by the length of the original report (over four hundred pages), prepared by Professor David Lavin. This summary highlights the findings contained in the original report, copies of which may be obtained from the CUNY Office of Program and Policy Research, 535 East 80th Street, New York, N.Y. 10021. A check or money order for $5.00 for each report (made payable to the Board of Higher Education) must accompany each order.

Open Admissions at the City University of New York: A Description of Academic Outcomes after Two Years, is another in a continuing series of reports on open admissions compiled by the CUNY Office of Program and Policy Research. An earlier report (Student Retention Under Open Admissions at the City University of New York: February, 1974) dealt with general trends in student retention at the City University of New York during the period, September 1970 through June 1972. The new report studies academic trends, in terms of credits earned, grade point average, and the ratio of credits earned to credits attempted.

Data on which the study is based were collected for freshmen who entered in 1970 and 1971. For the 1970 freshmen, academic outcomes were described over the course of the first four semesters. For the 1971 freshmen, academic outcomes were described for the first two semesters. Data on the first year performance of the two classes were compared. Data were reported in aggregate form for senior and community colleges: comparisons between individual CUNY colleges were also presented.

Four major topics were considered:

- Academic performance of students (grade point average and credit generation);
- retention as related to academic performance;
- the impact of compensatory programs upon retention and academic performance;
- comparison of academic outcomes for SEEK and non-SEEK students.

Based on high school grades received in English, foreign language, mathematics, science and social studies, analyses were conducted within certain high school average categories as follows:

High School Average	Senior College Classification	Community College Classification
Less than 70%	Level B	Level B
70.0 - 74.9%	Level A.1	Level A
75.0 - 79.9%	Level A.2	Regular 1
80.0% or above	Regular	Regular 2

At senior colleges open admissions students are in the Level B, Level A.1, and Level A.2 categories. At community colleges the open admissions students are in the Level B and Level A categories. These definitions allow one to compare senior and community college students at all levels of high school average.

ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Two types of academic performance analyses were conducted for senior and community college students. First, the 1970 and 1971 enrollees were compared on various measures of academic success in their first year of college. Second, academic performance over two years was described for the 1970 freshmen.

For both analyses, four academic measures were used: 1) Grade Point Average, 2) Credit Generation, 3) Credit Ratio, 4) Grade Point Average and Credit Generation considered simultaneously. The "success" criteria were set as follows:

Performance Variable	One Year Analyses	Two Year Analyses
Grade Point Average	% with 2.00 or better	% with 2.00 or better
Credit Generation	% earning 24 or more credits	% earning 48 or more credits
Credit Ratio	% earning at least 3/4 of credits attempted	% earning at least 3/4 of credits attempted
Credits & Grade Point Average Considered simultaneously	2.00 or more GPA & 24 or more credits	2.00 or more GPA & 48 or more credits

Aggregate findings for the one year analyses are summarized for the senior colleges in Table 1, and for the community colleges in Table 2. For the senior colleges, Table 1 indicates that high school average was positively related to every performance measure. That is, the higher the average, the greater the likelihood that students would equal or exceed the minimal success criteria. With regard to grade point average and credit ratio, no significant changes were observed for the 1970 and and 1971 freshmen.

This was not true for the credit generation variable. Here we note significant decreases for every level of student (except regular) in the 1971 cohort. This is probably due to the more systematic implementation of the policy of reduced credit loads in 1971. As a result of this policy, a smaller proportion of 1971 freshmen simultaneously earned 24 credits and at least a 2.00 grade point average.

TABLE 1

Summary of One Year Academic Performance Analyses:
Comparison of 1970 and 1971 Enrollees (Senior Colleges)

Performance Measure	LEVEL							
	B		A.1		A.2		Regular	
	70	71	70	71	70	71	70	71
Grade Pt. Average	33% (349)	32% (290)	43% (1282)	44% (1444)	65% (3360)	63% (3090)	87% (9196)	87% (8557)
Credits Earned	20% (352)	7% (293)	34% (1291)	21% (1460)	51% (3371)	41% (3095)	76% (9203)	74% (8567)
Credit Ratio	53% (336)	56% (283)	65% (1266)	67% (1418)	79% (3327)	78% (3035)	92% (9162)	92% (8506)
Credits Earned & Grade Pt. Average	13% (349)	5% (290)	23% (1282)	16% (1444)	43% (3360)	36% (3090)	71% (9196)	71% (8557)

Among the community college students, Table 2 shows that for every increase in high school average, there is an increase in the proportion of students attaining each success criterion. With regard to comparison of the 1970 and 1971 freshmen, no large differences were found. By and large, the picture is one of consistency.

TABLE 2

Summary of One Year Academic Performance Analyses: Comparison of 1970 and 1971 Enrollees (Community Colleges)

	LEVEL							
Performance	B		A		Regular 1		Regular 2	
Measure	70	71	70	71	70	71	70	71
Grade Pt. Average	44% (2054)	44% (1553)	57% (2471)	60% (2081)	72% (1818)	75% (1700)	86% (852)	89% (831)
Credits Earned	27% (2058)	25% (1560)	39% (2472)	39% (2087)	54% (1820)	48% (1701)	68% (852)	64% (832)
Credit Ratio	75% (1993)	70% (1486)	83% (2417)	80% (2033)	87% (1792)	88% (1676)	94% (844)	94% (828)
Credits Earned & Grade Pt. Average	20% (2054)	20% (1553)	32% (2471)	34% (2081)	49% (1818)	45% (1700)	66% (852)	62% (831)

Aggregate findings for the two year analyses (1970 freshmen) are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3

Summary of Academic Performance Analyses after Two Years for Senior and Community College Students who Enrolled in Fall, 1970

	Type of College							
	Sr. Level	Comm.	Sr. Level	Comm.	Sr. Level	Comm.	Sr. Level	Comm.
Performance Measure	B	B	A.1	A	A.2	REG 1	REG.	REG.2
Grade Point Average	35%	48%	50%	66%	70%	82%	90%	93%
Credit Generation	25	36	39	50	55	65	79	79
Credit Ratio	65	75	72	88	82	92	93	98
Credit & GPA	17	29	30	44	48	62	76	78

The summary findings show that the stronger the high school average, the stronger the performance record in college. Moreover, for every level of high school average, community college students were more likely to achieve the success criteria than their senior college counterparts. The only exception to this occurred for the Regular (senior) and Regular 2 (community) students, where the performance levels were essentially the same.

The aggregate data tend to mask the fact that there is considerable institutional variation. That is, at some colleges students were much more likely to achieve various success criteria than at other campuses. While there were variations depending on the particular high school average category being considered, in general senior college students at Lehman, Brooklyn, and York were the most likely to attain the thresholds defined by the success criteria. Among the community colleges, students at Kingsborough and Borough of Manhattan Community College made the strongest showing.

The individual college data do not lend themselves to easy interpretation. Differences in the composition of the student bodies, possible differences in academic standards, effects of differential retention rates, differences in grading policies, and differential effectiveness of educational policies, may, alone or in combination, explain differences in student academic performance.

RETENTION AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Retention data -- published in the earlier report -- were again considered for the first two freshman classes entering CUNY since the inception of open admissions. These classes were compared with regard to retention rates. The relation of these rates to various characteristics of student academic performance were then considered.

Among the senior colleges, Table 4 shows that after one semester, students with high school averages of above 80 had higher retention rates than students with averages below 70. The data also show almost no change between the 1970 and 1971 cohorts in the proportions returning for the second semester of the freshman year.

TABLE 4
Comparison of 1970 and 1971 Cohorts: Retention Rates After One Semester by High School Average
(Senior and Community Colleges)

High School Average	SENIOR COLLEGES		COMMUNITY COLLEGES	
	1970	1971	1970	1971
80+	93% (9952)	92% (9294)	80% (1067)	85% (915)
75-79	88% (3845)	87% (3582)	81% (2258)	84% (2036)
70-74	86% (1508)	86% (1703)	79% (3163)	80% (2618)
Less than 70	81% (434)	83% (352)	76% (2774)	77% (2031)
TOTALS*	91% (15739)	90% (14931)	79% (9262)	81% (7600)

*Students with no high school average excluded.

In general, academic performance of senior college students during the first semester of the freshman year was positively associated with retention. Students who achieved at least a 2.00 average, who earned 12 or more credits, and who earned at least 75% of the credits they attempted, were more likely to return for their second semester than students who failed to achieve these criteria.

Of all academic indices, credit ratio (the percent earning at least 3/4 of the credits attempted), was most closely related to retention. All

academic performance indices seemed to be more closely related to retention than high school average itself. That is, students who failed to meet the minimal performance criteria (2.00 GPA, 12 or more credits, .75 credit ratio), were more likely to drop out, regardless of high school average. The relation between performance criteria and retention was substantially the same for both the 1970 and 1971 cohorts.

Among the community colleges, Table 4 shows that one semester retention was positively associated with high school average; however, academic performance was more closely related to retention than high school average. That is, a student's academic performance in his first term of college was a better predictor of retention than his high school performance. This appeared to be borne out by the fact that the likelihood of dropout was frequently greatest among "regular 2" students whose academic performance was weak in their first collegiate semester.

COMPENSATORY PROGRAMS

Background: When CUNY began its open admissions program, it anticipated that substantial numbers of students would be deficient in basic academic skills. Accordingly, each campus was to develop its own compensatory programs aimed at upgrading these essential skills. It was presumed such programs would increase the chances that students would be able to complete successfully a course of study leading to a degree. Moreover, the compensatory effort was seen as a major factor in avoiding the revolving door (high attrition rates) which had characterized open admissions programs in other places.

While every campus was asked to develop some compensatory program structure, the specifics of implementation were left to the discretion of each campus. The result was considerable variation in styles of response.

However, in almost every case the compensatory effort involved at least two basic components: (1) Formal remedial courses (which initially offered little or no credit); (2) a policy of reduced credit loads during the freshman year (intended to ease the more poorly prepared student gradually into the mainstream of college work).

The Study: The study assessed the relationship between remedial courses and reduced credit load, and student academic performance. The measures of academic performance were grade point average, credit generation (in the sophomore year), credit ratio, and retention.

Remediation was considered to be effective or "successful" if, within any category of high school average, those who received it performed as well or better than those who did not receive it. Reduced credit loads were considered effective if those who attempted less than 12 credits in a semester (or less than 24 in a year) performed as well or better than those not on reduced loads.

This criterion is based on an important assumption: that those taking remediation or reduced credit loads had lower levels of academic skills as measured by the Open Admissions Test (OAT). Comparisons of remedial and non-remedial students showed that the former usually did, in fact, have lower OAT scores.

As measured by the Open Admissions Test, the need for remediation was closely associated with high school average. Moreover, the need was slightly greater for the 1971 freshmen than for the 1970 group. At the senior colleges over 80% of level B students needed some form of remedial work. Among level A.1 students 53% (in 1970) and 66% (in 1971) needed remedial work. For level A.2 students 31% (in 1970) and 39% (1971) required such work. Slightly less than 15% of regular students showed a need for at least some remediation.

At the community colleges, the need for remediation was greater than for the senior colleges, with the exception of level B students, where the need was greater at the latter.

For both senior and community colleges, there was considerable variation from campus to campus in the proportions needing remedial work. There was also considerable variation in the proportions doing such work.

Various sets of analyses were conducted in an effort to assess the relationship of remediation and reduced credit load to academic outcomes.

Findings:
Remediation

For the senior colleges, remediation seems to have been a mixed success during the freshman year. That is, while remedial experience did not always show positive effects upon academic performance, neither did it show an overall negative effect. Moreover, the record of success varied from college to college. The evidence suggests that remediation seemed somewhat more effective in the second year of open admissions than it was in the first year. This may be interpreted as an indication of progress.

At the community colleges numerous instances were found in which remediation seemed to improve student academic performance. These occurred for every college, but overall, the college where these effects occurred most frequently was Kingsborough.

Insofar as retention is concerned, senior college students who took remedial work in their first term of college were as likely to continue for their second semester as those who took none. In short, the remedial experience had some positive effect on student retention. The findings for the community colleges are similar. Remediation seemed to increase the one semester retention rates.

The effects of compensatory programs on academic performance in the second year were also considered. Such data view the effects of compensatory programs after they have occurred, rather than simultaneously with their occurrence, as in the first set of analyses.

Although the analysis showed little evidence to indicate positive effects of first year remediation on academic performance in the sophomore year at all senior colleges, improvement in student performance was noted at certain individual campuses. Particularly at Baruch College, City College, and York College it appears that the remedial experience of the freshman year generated positive effects on the academic achievement of students in their sophomore year.

For the community colleges the data suggest that the freshman remedial experience generated improvement in academic performance in the sophomore year at all campuses. Among individual colleges, Kingsborough was the campus where the effects were most noteworthy.

Findings:
Reduced Credit Load

The evidence indicates a few instances in which senior college students who took reduced loads performed as well as those who attempted a full number of credits. In particular, level B students in 1971 who took reduced loads approximated the performance of those not restricted.

Sophomore year performance showed some positive effects of reduced credit load on academic performance at some senior colleges. This occurred at Baruch, City, Hunter and York Colleges.

In the senior colleges, the relation of credit load restriction to retention after one semester is as follows: Students who took "moderately" reduced loads (between 8 - 11.99 credits) were about as likely to return

for the second term as those who took full loads. However, those who took severely reduced loads (less than 8 credits) were less likely to be retained for the second semester than those who took full loads.

At the community colleges the results regarding the effects of reduced credit loads were not encouraging. The few positive effects noted were for students on moderately reduced credit loads as compared with those on severely reduced loads. The retention of students who took severely reduced loads was lower than the retention of unrestricted students in the same high school average category. Aggregate findings for the community colleges show no positive effect on academic performance in the sophomore year.

Conclusion:

The outstanding fact emerging from the research on compensatory programs is variability of results from one campus to another. Those campuses which have obtained positive results will provide a basis for future modifications in open admissions program implementation on all campuses. Results from individual campuses must be scrutinized with care. Based on its own successes and failures, each campus continues to modify its program from one year to the next. The effect of such changes should be researched, analyzed and assessed before they are adopted on a system-wide basis.

COMPARISON OF SEEK and non-SEEK STUDENTS:

SEEK and non-SEEK students were compared with regard to academic performance, retention, and effects of compensatory education programs.

Based upon performance on the Open Admissions Test, the SEEK population contains much higher proportions of academically disadvantaged

students at every level of high school average than the non-SEEK population. Parity in performance with non-SEEK students of comparable high school average was therefore used as the criterion for determining academic success of the SEEK group.

During the freshman year of college, SEEK students who entered in 1970 (particularly level B's and A.1's who account for most of this group) were superior to the non-SEEK group in the proportions achieving a C average. Their credit ratios were also comparable, but the credit earning performance of the SEEK students was substantially below that of the non-SEEK students, a finding directly attributable to the SEEK policy of initial restricted credit loads. The freshman year data for the 1971 group suggest the same conclusion, except that the difference in credit productivity is smaller (due probably to the fact that 1971 non-SEEK freshmen were more likely to have credit restrictions than was the case in 1970).

The likelihood of 1970 SEEK freshmen - most of whom are level B and A - attaining a C average over the two-year period was about the same as for the non-SEEK students. However, the SEEK group was less likely to have earned 48 or more credits over the period.

Trend analyses also showed that in the second year of college, SEEK students attempted more credits than they did in their freshman year, and that their credit earning performance in the sophomore year was not as far below the non-SEEK students as it had been in the freshman year. Indeed, SEEK students increased their credit generating performance in their sophomore year, while the non-SEEK students showed a slight decrease.

The retention data showed that during the freshman year of college the one-semester retention of SEEK students was equivalent to that of the non-SEEK group. This was true for both the 1970 and 1971 cohorts.

Inasmuch as the SEEK group has characteristics which would lead one to expect lower retention rates, this is a favorable outcome.

Over the period of four semesters for the 1970 freshmen, we found that the net retention rates for the SEEK students were slightly higher than for the non-SEEK students (with the exception of regular students, where there was a slight difference in favor of the non-SEEK group). Among dropouts, the SEEK return rates were slightly higher than the non-SEEK rates.

Compensatory outcomes were compared in terms of two factors: remediation and restricted credit load. Remedial coursework in the freshman year showed little effect on the first year academic performance of SEEK students in the 1970 cohort. In contrast, some effects were noted for the non-SEEK students. For the 1971 freshman, the remedial experience did show effects on academic performance for both groups, but the effects were somewhat stronger for the SEEK students. With regard to one semester retention, SEEK and non-SEEK students in both cohorts were helped by the remedial experience.

With regard to restricted credit load, there were some effects for the 1970 freshmen, and these were more likely to occur for SEEK than for non-SEEK students, but overall, credit restriction did not exert any strong effects on academic performance. For both SEEK and non-SEEK students a moderate rather than a severely restricted credit load increased the likelihood of retention.

Analyses showed positive effects of freshman year compensatory programs on academic performance in the sophomore year. These effects were stronger for the SEEK students than for the non-SEEK group.

Overall, based on parity of performance, data showed that SEEK students were doing quite well in comparison with their non-SEEK peers.

A Note on Limitations:

The initial problems generated by the short lead time in planning and implementing the open admissions program had repercussions in the area of research. As a federation of colleges, the university was unprepared to deal with research requiring uniform data. There were, for example, about 60 different letter grades used by the colleges, all of which had to be codified and synthesized into a single data base.

There were other problems. Some campuses were unable to provide data in the form requested, and with satisfactory levels of reliability. Thus, John Jay College, Bronx and Hostos Community Colleges are excluded from the 1970 group (except for certain retention estimates). LaGuardia Community College and Medgar Evers College only began in 1971. The former was not included in every analysis, because its quarter system of student work-study (cooperative education) made available data incompatible with other colleges in the system. The necessary work will be completed for the inclusion of all colleges in subsequent reports.

A second limitation of the data concerns missing students. The files for both the 1970 and 1971 freshman classes are now complete. Analyses indicate that the students excluded in this study do not introduce any significant bias into the results.

A third limitation of the data concerns the fact that there are students in our files for whom no information on high school average is available. This is a result of several factors, including high school equivalency diplomas (for which no average is computed) and

residency outside New York City. However, data for students with "no high school average" are presented in this study. Where possible, updating of high school average information has been completed.

There have been substantial recent improvements, both in the university's data collection system and especially in its computer capability. These improvements will ultimately reduce the limitations under which data for the first two years of open admissions were collected. A significant reduction in the time lag between report generation and time periods covered by the data should also result. While data in this study are two years old, CUNY is rapidly moving to the point where this time lag should be cut in half.